

JULY 2, 1997

Dear Colleague:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with an update on the recent reauthorization of the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act" (IDEA) (P.L. 105-17), and to discuss how the new law will affect you and your work. There are several sections of the new law that may be of interest to you. As you know, President Clinton signed the reauthorization of IDEA into law on June 4, 1997. The new law has four sections:

- ☐ General Provisions
- ☐ Assistance for Education of All Children with Disabilities
- ☐ Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities, and
- ☐ National Activities to Improve Education of Children with Disabilities.

The legislation is accessible for viewing and downloading on the Internet at the following address:
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/index.html>.

DISCRETIONARY PROGRAMS OF IDEA

Prior to the reauthorization of IDEA, OSEP supported discretionary projects under 14 different authorities. IDEA now combines these 14 authorities into 7 authorities under Part D, "National Activities to Improve Education of children with Disabilities", of the new law.

Under Part D, Subpart 1:

1. **"State Improvement Grants"**
(Part D, Sec. 651-656), which are awarded to SEAs, and of which 75% of funds must be used for professional development activities unless the Secretary grants a waiver to a State; Under Part D, Subpart 2:
2. **"Research and Innovation to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities"**
(Part D, Chapter 1, Sec. 672), which will fund new knowledge development, integration of research and practice, and improving professional knowledge.
3. **"Personnel Preparation to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities"**
(Part D, Chapter 1, Sec. 673), which will fund projects dealing with low incidence disabilities, leadership preparation, projects of national significance, and those dealing with high incidence disabilities.
4. **"Studies and Evaluations"**
(Part D, Chapter 1, Sec. 674), which will include national assessment studies, preparation of OSEP's Annual Report to Congress, and providing technical assistance to LEAs. Funding for this section comes from a portion of funds appropriated under Parts B, "Assistance for Education of All Children with Disabilities, and C, Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities, of the law.

5. "Parent Training and Information Services"

(Part D, Chapter 2, Sec. 682-684), which includes authorization for three activities: Parent Training and Information Centers, Community Parent Resource Centers, and Technical Assistance for Parent Training and Information Centers.

6. "Coordinated Technical Assistance and Dissemination of Information"

(Part D, Chapter 2, Sec. 285), which includes authorization for technical assistance and dissemination to improve early intervention, educational and transitional services and results for children with disabilities and their families, and address systemic-change goals and priorities.

7. "Technology Development, Demonstration, and Utilization"

(Part D, Chapter 2, Sec. 687) under which authorized activities include conducting research and development, demonstrations, providing technical assistance, communicating information on technology, captioning, and descriptive video services.

Projects supported under the State Improvement authority are administered by OSEP's Monitoring and State Improvement Program (MSIP), while administration of projects supported under the Coordinated Technical Assistance, Support, and Dissemination of Information authority are shared by MSIP and the Research-to-Practice Division. The new law authorizes the Secretary of Education to use funds appropriated under Part D ("National Activities to Improve Education of Children with Disabilities") to make continuation awards to projects funded under the previous law, if your project period extends beyond Fiscal Year 1998 (school year 1997 - 1998). In addition to continuing grant applications, other areas of interest to your work include changes in the new law that affect proposed priorities, peer review procedures, and the comprehensive planning process. Process for Fiscal Year 1998 Priorities

We are currently in the process of developing priorities for Fiscal Year 1998 based on the language of the new law. The Department has the authority to finalize these priorities without receiving public comment. However, as previous priorities have benefited from stakeholder comment, we are now developing a process to solicit your, and other stakeholders', input on the priorities proposed for Fiscal Year 1998. Standing Panels In accordance with the new legislation, we will be implementing certain changes to our peer review procedures over the next year. Beginning in January 1998, we will appoint standing panels to evaluate applications under Subpart 2, Part D, of IDEA. These panels will consist of individuals with appropriate expertise and background, who will be asked to serve on a panel for no more than three consecutive years. We anticipate that, as in years past, some of you may participate in this grant application review process. We will continue to keep you updated as our plans for standing panels are developed and finalized this summer and fall. Comprehensive Planning for Discretionary Programs

As required by IDEA, OSEP is establishing a comprehensive planning process for the discretionary activities administered by the Research-to-Practice Division. This process will essentially continue the work, authorized under the previous law, of stakeholders who helped us articulate program agendas for several discretionary programs, including the "National Personnel Agenda," "Program for Children and Youth with Serious Emotional Disturbance," "Program for Children with Severe Disabilities," "Special Studies Program," and the "Technology, Educational Media and Materials for Individuals with Disabilities Programs." The new comprehensive planning process will continue to involve "individuals with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, appropriate professionals, and representatives of State and local educational agencies, private schools, institutions of higher education, other Federal agencies, the National Council on Disability, and national organizations with an interest in, and expertise in, providing services to children with disabilities and their families" (Sec. 661(a)(2)(A) to (D)). We will be soliciting stakeholder input and involvement in this process shortly after the start of the next fiscal year, October 1, 1997. The reauthorization of IDEA has continued a long history of support for discretionary projects that contribute to

improved results for children with disabilities and their families. We will continue to keep you informed of our progress and look forward to your on-going involvement, participation, and support as we work to implement the new law in the coming months.

Sincerely,

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